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A^o TREATISE

ON THE

Need of the M. E. Church

WITH RESPECT TO

HER MINISTRY:

EMBODIED IN

A SERMON,

AND PREACHED BY REQUEST BEFORE THE NEW-YORK
EAST CONFERENCE, MAY 22, 1855.

BY R. S. FOSTER, D. D.

PRINTED BY A VOTE OF THE CONFERENCE.

"I also will show mine opinion."

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The New-York East Conference,
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P r e f a c e .

A word of explanation, it may be, ought to accompany the following thoughts. The object of the author is to indicate a need. This aim is pursued steadily throughout the discourse. It would not be strange if many who *prefer compliment* should be offended; and rise up from the reading, feeling that we have been unkind—may be, accounting us an enemy. But we are not. Most profoundly in our hearts do we love and venerate the Methodist ministry. Since the apostolic days, we do not believe a more devoted, sacrificing, and successful ministry has blessed the world. But ours is no blind admiration. Whatever of excellence we may accord, we cannot but see many things in which improvement is desirable, and possible—nay, a most urgent need. While we sincerely believe, that in much we have surpassed our brethren, we must see that in some things we

fall below them. The object of this discourse is not to glory in what we have done or been, but to indicate wherein we may and ought to improve; not to eulogize our excellences and boast of our achievements, but to point out wherein we may and need to become greater and better.

Should the publishment awaken in any minds more earnest aspirations after knowledge, with more careful habits of study; and especially, should it lead the young and rising ministry to a more thorough and careful preparation for their sacred work; and yet more, should it, with a higher intellectuality, promote also a profounder consecration of heart and soul, the end of publication will be answered.



Subject.

THE NEED OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH WITH RESPECT TO HER
MINISTRY.





Text.

STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A
WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED.—
2 TIMOTHY II, 15.



Treatise.

EVERY sincere and honest-minded minister must feel that his is no ordinary vocation ; that, indeed, God has intrusted him with the most exalted and responsible mission ever committed to man.

How he can most acceptably and successfully execute the momentous trust, will be with him the all-absorbing thought. Should there be anything peculiar in the times or seasons, conditions or places, he will consider this. The love he bears the cause of his Master—the weight of souls pressing upon his heart—the eternal interests of those dependent on his ministry—his solemn conviction of accountability, must impel him to seek earnestly the best qualifications for his great work.

The Church of God is divided, as we think, providentially, into various denominations. Each has its special ministry; which, though bearing a general commission from the supreme Head of the Church, is wisely limited to a particular sphere of labor.

Turning aside from what is common and general, it is our purpose in the present discourse to address especially the ministry of our own denomination; and to discuss what we conceive to be a special and urgent want among ourselves. How much that shall be said might be applicable elsewhere, we will not be anxious to inquire; it will suffice if we can profitably consider what concerns us, leaving others to do the same service for themselves.

The particular subject we propose for discussion is, the need of the Methodist Episcopal Church with relation to her Ministry.

We will endeavor to speak plainly, but in love. If what shall be said in some parts should grate harshly upon established prejudices, or awaken unpleasant sensibilities, be assured anything of the kind is outside of our intention;

and ere condemnation is passed, ask this one question: Is there cause? We are sure a brother's heart moves us.

Without further preliminaries, in pursuance of the discussion we submit, as our first proposition:—

I. The Church needs a thoroughly-educated and liberally-informed ministry.

If a more particular explanation of the proposition should be deemed desirable, it will be found in the course of the following argumentations: for the present, let it be understood in its most comprehensive import, as including a thorough training to habits of study, and extensive cultivation in the entire circle of the sciences, and of all human knowledge, so far as practicable, bearing directly or remotely on theology.

1. The first argument we submit is drawn from the present condition of the Church as contrasted with the past.

In eliciting this argument a brief retrospect will be necessary. It is not assumed, that under

all circumstances extensive erudition is an *absolute* prerequisite.* Exigencies, it is admitted, may arise, in which the Church might justifiably employ even uncultured men in this service. Such was the emergency at first, when "fishermen and tentmakers" were thrust into the vineyard. Of such a ministry, God-honored and successful as it has been, under the most trying and urgent necessities, we have no reproaches to utter. Were it necessary, we would emulate any one in their eulogium. They need none. "Their record is on high." They have long since entered upon their reward.

A brief retrospect will show that we of the present time enter the service under the pressure of very different circumstances, and with the burden of other necessities upon us. They did well for their times, and nobly met their responsibilities: we are called upon, with equal usefulness, to fill the place assigned us.

Methodism, it is universally known, arose

* Even now the demand for a liberal education, however desirable it might be, is not absolutely imperative in all cases.

under peculiar circumstances, and to meet a peculiar want : at a time when vital Christianity scarcely existed : when society, in one of its extremes, had become proud, dissolute, and skeptical ; intoxicated with a vain and false philosophy, or stupefied with empty formulas ; pledged to a desolating and scornful infidelity, or implexed in the meshes of an equally destructive and impious churchism : in the other, sunken into the lowest depths of neglected poverty, ignorance, and vice ; in all its departments, and throughout its entire tissues, a waste and ruin ; priests and people abandoned to the same excesses of hypocrisy and impiety. There were many honorable exceptions both in the ranks of the clergy and laity, but such was the general state of society. Religion, as an inward life, and as a vital force, controlling and molding the public morals, was well-nigh extinct.

This is alleged neither in the spirit of adulation nor reproach. It is referred to merely as a melancholy fact, the recognition of which is indispensable to a correct understanding and exposition of the institution we are discussing. What

was that *ism* in its beginning? We answer what is worthy of note. It was not either in fact or in the intention a new Church organization—a new sect. It was simply and only, a revival in the bosom of the Church of primitive Christianity ; a reawakening of the slumbering spirit of evangelism.

A few men, under the light and influence of the Spirit of God made to see the deplorable condition of the Church, and to feel for the plague of God's people, asked themselves this question, What can be done? Methodism is the practical exponent—the wrought-out answer. They were the men for the crisis : men thoroughly trained, men of comprehensive views, full of faith and the Holy Ghost ; men of God's own raising up, having a plenary comprehension of their mission, and endowed with genius and energy for its execution. They saw that the ordinary routine of Church forms could not reach the case : that Christendom must be startled ; that the sleeping Church must at any hazard be roused : that in order thereto, irregular and unusual efforts would be requisite—they must break

over and away from long-established customs ; must speak a new language ; and by their very daring and the chivalry of the movement, compel attention and coerce impression. It was the only way.

The result was precisely what might have been anticipated. The Church, proud of her pompous forms, imperious in her hoary dignity, and unconscious as death of her real condition, or too unscrupulous to acknowledge it, was roused ; but it was the excitement of rage. Her pride was irritated. She regarded the movement with mingled dread and sorrow, amazement and detestation. The fanatics were anathematized, and canonical doors indignantly closed against them.

The infidel spirit of the age, in close affiliation with the Church, united in the same political bonds, mixing in the same circles, and not unfrequently disguised beneath the cowl and surplice, was alarmed. Branded as madmen and heretics, these evangelists were driven with derision from the learned and aristocratic walks, and spurned from the very sanctuaries of religion.

Nothing daunted at their accumulated disgraces, nothing discouraged, like their great prototype, they "turned to the *Gentiles*:" following the example of their divine Master, they betook themselves to the streets and woods; to the neglected and ignorant poor; the simple and forsaken population of the rural, mining, and manufacturing districts.

Their persecutions but increased their zeal. Collision and warfare inured them to hardship, and taught their hands to fight. Practice and self-reliance gave scope and pungency to their plans and efforts; and all combined to educate them for their heroic mission. Their earnest preaching, and fervent prayers, and abounding labors—their almost superhuman activity—the novelty of their worship in open fields—the strangeness of their doctrines—and above all, the divine Spirit that went with them and before them, to prepare the way, attracted thousands of eager and excited listeners.

Before men had time to consider the movement, and while the half-roused Church was yet rubbing open her leaden eyes and muttering over

the disorder, Great Britain was on fire—a conflagration raged over the kingdom. England and Ireland were wrapped in the flame. A reformation unparalleled since the days of the apostles was in progress. Multitudes rushed to the standard of the “new faith,” as it was opprobriously called. The nation swayed like a forest under the pressure of a tempest. Onward, irresistibly, the surging, deepening current rolled, from one extreme of the kingdom to the other, carrying the seeds of a new life in its bosom. It was futile to oppose it: for God was in it, and the impelling force was omnipotent. But now a new want arose: these converts must be organized—must be supplied with the means of growth and instruction—must have pastoral oversight.

The Wesleys and Whitefield, the great apostles of the movement, though among the most indefatigable men that ever lived, could not diffuse themselves over the whole kingdom, to feed the children they had begotten, and who cried to them for bread. They could not transfer them to perish under the ministration of the unconverted clergy in the parishes

—nor would the people contentedly listen to such blind guides. “A stranger’s voice they would not follow.”

What must be done? The Lord of the harvest solved the problem. From the ranks of the unlearned but divinely taught and experienced converts, the Holy Ghost, as at first, selected and designated to their brethren a sufficient number of strong, though uncultivated minds to take part in the ministry: such men as John Nelson and his coadjutors. The result amply vindicated the wisdom of the arrangement. Destitute, confessedly, of many desirable qualifications, they yet had all the endowments that under the circumstances were absolutely essential to the part they were called to perform. They were superior in breadth of information to the people they were appointed to teach; they possessed vigorous and improving minds; the people heard them gladly, and were in a condition to profit by their simple and earnest instructions; and under the guidance of their learned leaders, stimulated themselves with the power of a new inward life, they soon became “workmen that

needed not to be ashamed ;” men of eminent abilities, many of them, and of no mean scholarship. Such were the circumstances under which an unlettered ministry were at first introduced among us. It was not a choice, but an emergency ; not a preference, but an absolute necessity ; a dernier resort. But even then learning stood in the fore-front and led the van. The ripest scholars, and best-trained minds of Oxford presided over the enterprise ; men of wide scope and extensive erudition, to whom nature had been munificent, and fortune prodigal of her favors. Such minds stood forward, and as the masters, guided the grand movement. Thus it has always been. When the Head of the Church has found it necessary to employ unlearned men in this service, it has been subordinately. Paul the scholar was prominent among the apostles ; Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and others of like attainments, pioneered the Reformation. But we repeat, these unlettered men were adapted to the time ; they answered an emergency and answered it well, and merit, as they will receive, the undying honor and gratitude of the religious world.

Learning would have enlarged their qualifications, but they were useful, *not because* of their deficiencies, but in despite of them. But we are not therefore to infer that such a ministry is adapted to all times, suited to every exigency.

We live in the midst of great changes; new circumstances are ever pressing us; nothing abideth in one stay. Alas! for the system that fails to recognize and make preparation for this fact; it must, by an inevitable law of progress, become obsolete and perish.

Methodism is not now, either positively or relatively, what it was in its inception, or early manifestations; other Church organizations are not what they were; society is not what it was. A wide and marked change has ensued; a change, which it must be obvious to all but the hopelessly infatuated vitally affects the question we have under consideration; a change, to the achievement of which, much may be attributed to the inherent force and energy of the system itself.

Let us contemplate briefly the change within the body.

The Methodist people in the middle of the nineteenth century differ widely from the same community in the middle or even at the going out of the eighteenth—widely, in various and most important respects.

Habits of thrift and industry, of economy and prudent living, which piety always and necessarily begets, soon wrought a marked change in their external circumstances; and as a consequence, in their relative social position. Thus advanced in the means of respectability, and at the same time under the elevating influence of the new and higher principles which they had received, a most salutary improvement in their moral and intellectual character was the inevitable result. Education and culture, æsthetic refinement and appreciative talent supervened. The transformation was rapid, for it was a mighty impulse which carried it forward—an inward vital force renewing and purifying, expanding and exalting them. By a necessary law of elective affinity, others were attracted to them as their spheres approximated. The old respectability, who at first stood aloof, soon made friends with

them: and drawn by their doctrines, and impressed by their examples, many entered their communion.

The finding is, that now in little more than a hundred years, Methodism, in her laity, in whatever constitutes respectability, in wealth, in learning and liberality, begins to take rank with the oldest and most influential denominations in Protestant Christendom.

Her people have really and relatively changed. Meanwhile a change has been progressing without, quite as important in its relations to our argument, as that which has transpired within.

Provoked by our example, and emulous of our zeal, other Churches have imbibed the reformation spirit, and become evangelical in doctrine and life. A new race of ministers, the natural offspring of such a change, have ascended their pulpits; a race whose lips are touched, and whose hearts glow like a furnace—who compete with us nobly in zeal, and labors, and sacrifices—who kneel with us in the hovel, and cross our paths everywhere in the wilderness; whom to equal in piety is a praise; and whom to excel in

other accomplishments were most difficult to any—an honor certainly, which it would be questionable modesty for us to claim.

The way from our fold has become wide and inviting; and to our reproach trodden like a highway. We no longer present to the conscience-smitten the only asylum, to the spiritual and earnest minded disciple, the solitary inclosure, in which he may find subsistence and sympathy. If we once had anything in our doctrines peculiarly nourishing and quickening, it has been ostensibly appropriated; if anything in our means and appliances useful, it has been substituted; if anything in our experience and life, it has been transferred. In some of these particulars we may still claim, but will scarcely be able to establish, a preëminence; while many will attribute the pretence to very stupid vanity. The beneficial change which has thus penetrated the inclosures of the Churches, has extended outward also to the world.

Universal society has undergone, and is yet undergoing, a great change—a rapid and glorious transformation—a progress and expansion un-

paralleled in former ages. Information is diffusing itself as the light of the sun—shining everywhere, streaming through the crannies of the obscurest cabins, penetrating the fastnesses of the country, irradiating the hills, and illuminating the valleys of Christendom, and covering the earth with the bloom of a fresh life.

The men that babble with diversified tongues, and understand mysterious symbols, are in every by-way. The race are on the march to a higher destiny. Ology, with a hundred prefixes, is the watchword of the times. Wherefore, and the reason, make up the confusion of a million inquiring voices. The prophet's day seems rushing upon us: "Knowledge shall be increased." The school and the gospel are enthroning a new era.

Such are the altered circumstances in which we of the present time are called to service. Hence, we repeat it, an emergency is upon us. We must adapt ourselves to the change or our mission is accomplished, and other hands now ready will enter into our labors, and gather our ripe and ample harvest; or it will remain ungarnered to rot in the unreaped field. Unlike

our fathers, who stood so nobly in their lot, will sink ignobly down, a hissing and reproach; and the faithful historian, who shall honor our sires, will execrate their sons. The generations as they pass, and gaze with wonder upon the ruin, sublime and sad, will only repeat the merited but blasting satire, "The fathers began to build, but the sons were not able to finish."

That an educated and informed people will require a better educated and informed ministry, we hold to be axiomatic. A teacher must be competent for his work, or he will not, *he ought not* to be heard. He will first be commiserated, then endured, finally despised. Even really unimportant defects, if glaring and inexcusable, must excite disgust and aversion. The same people begotten by his ministry, and nourished in their infancy, should they become superior in breadth of information and æsthetic culture, will no longer listen to him except by sufferance. Why should they? Will a man sit as learner at the feet of a child? Will he, *can he* become the docile listener at the lips of one he knows to be his inferior? whose ignorance shames, and

whose inabilities offend him? Will he, especially when, without serious compromise of feeling or principle, he can supply himself and family with the instruction and entertainment which they crave, but which their teacher cannot furnish? The supposition is preposterous. He may, from the influence of cherished associations and the residuum of early attachments, suffer on and "endure to the end," but his children will not.

This is precisely the tendency at the present time: a tendency which must increase and produce wide havoc, if we awake not to our responsibility. While we loiter to discuss the propriety of adapting ourselves to the demand, or stupidly ignore it, or in weakness lament over it, our best children will forsake us; and many of those remaining will hold us in merited derision. It is useless—in vain—to quarrel with this tendency. It is the natural operation of a universal and inevitable law. As well dispute with gravitation. Our contest, however fierce and protracted, must end in defeat. We struggle against fate. Men will still require teachers competent to instruct.

To no purpose do we refer to our former suc-

cesses, and laud their honored instruments : the monuments and the men belong to another age. The case is altered. We are pressed with different necessities, and require another kind and measure of skill. Their success is no pledge of ours, their monuments augur no triumphs for us. Methodism has now entered cities, and ascended to polished walks. Her hearers sit, or would if she were just to herself, in senatorial halls, dignify judicial benches, occupy presidencies of colleges and universities, crowd the ranks of the learned professions, fill the places of commerce, and mingle in all the high and animated interests of this excited age. They are familiar with men, and books, and things. They gather from urbane walks and classic grounds. They must be furnished with a ministry which will deserve their respect, and win their esteem ; not for piety only, but for learning and intelligence also. None other will be long heard. Deprive them of this, and no devotion to tenets, no attachment to a name, will fetter them long. They will bow at another shrine, and gather wisdom from other oracles more congenial to their tastes, and more

commendable to their understandings, if not more profitable to their souls; and for whatever of evil may result we will be responsible.

But we are told, all this supposed emergency proceeds from a false estimate of our mission! that we aspire to what does not belong to us! that we are placing ourselves in a false attitude! that Methodism was never intended for the better informed! that we were raised up expressly to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water,"—to do the scavenger work of the "highways and hedges!" that when we have wrought the stone from the quarry, and brought the hewn timber from the forest, our work is done; we must deliver up to others more skillful to perfect and finish! that our appropriate sphere is the frontier, the unhewn cabin of the wilderness! that if we enter cities, it is for the lanes, and cellars, and garrets! that building the walls, and adorning the temple, is reserved for superior workmen! And they are not always enemies that speak of us thus; it is a home language, a domestic sentiment. But is it true?

We glory in our relation to the people; and

feel honored that, like our Master, we gave them the gospel when they were neglected and despised. God forbid that we should ever forget them, or diminish our labors for them. We will not. Our ministry will still seek them out. We will follow them to their scanty homes, and open our doors and arms to their ragged and destitute children: while we have bread, they shall never hunger. But we can no longer claim this as a peculiar honor; others divide it with us. And we deny that, in any sense, our mission is peculiarly to them; or that we have either any special right, or special duty, to minister to them. As seen already, our special labors among them at the first, was an accident of our circumstances and of the times: not needed, to the praise of other denominations be it said, peculiarly now. While we admit that our gospel belongs to the poor, and our duty in common with others is to furnish them, and our glorious privilege; we deny any monopoly of the honor or obligation.

But especially do we protest against any construction which would limit us to this field, as arrogant on the part of our enemies, and suicidal

in ourselves ; involving as it does distinctions we have no authority to avow, and a cruelty we have no right to practice. We know no rich ; no poor. Our gospel is to a race, all of whom, without regard to adventitious distinctions, are equally interested in its Saviour and salvation. The rich need our ministry as much as the poor, and are as much entitled to it. We dare not repel, or forsake them, and it will be our undying reproach, if through our stupidity they have to forsake us. We have no compromises to offer, but we have sacred duties to perform. It may possibly be found in the day of accounts that the souls of the rich and educated are almost as valuable as those of the poor ; and that it was quite as censurable to refuse efforts for their salvation. No ! No !! No !!! We deny it. He is an enemy who asserts it. We cannot submit to the idea of degrading caste ; we refuse to be limited ; and we cannot be limited, if we are faithful to ourselves and to our Master. The shame and the guilt will be ours, if we allow ourselves to be stupid ; and then, because the refined and informed, who cannot endure us,

turn to our superiors, we revenge ourselves upon them by assuming to be the ministers of the poor. It will not last long ; the poor themselves will stay with us but a little while when they find we are inferior to others who will serve them. Blind indeed will we be if we do not perceive this.

We repeat, then, in the conclusion of the argument, the change which has passed in our own body, and in other denominations, and in general society, requires that we should have a more thoroughly educated and liberally informed ministry.

The want is a *real* want. It is not a mere caprice, not a fastidious taste, not an unsound or morbid condition of the times ; it comes upon us as an absolute need, a craving which is lawful, and must be met, or untold calamity ensue. It may be called treason, but before God, we publish it as our deliberate judgment and conviction, that the Church we serve, and the generation in which we live, absolutely need, perishingly need, a higher intellectuality in our pulpit performances—more thought, more culture—more, they

not only need it, but we shall be guilty if we fail to furnish it. We say nothing of others, institute no comparisons, but this only; *our ministry* needs to be elevated. The grade of our preaching is not, on the whole, commensurate with the wants of the people we serve or our obligations to them and the Master whose commission we bear.

2. Our second argument will be drawn from the relations of Methodism to theology. We occupy much common ground in theology, much in relation to which we are at peace with our neighbors: but we claim also some disputed domain. Many bloodless battles have been fought, and victories won, and truces made; but the end is not yet. There are future and fiercer contests, greater and more momentous issues. Our work is but begun, our past experiences and achievements but initial—preliminary.

It requires no extent of observation, no astuteness of penetration, to perceive that a process of reconstruction is going forward. Truths which have been regarded as settled and stored away, labeled, in the archives of orthodoxy, are

to be brought out and subjected to the crucible again; "old land-marks" to be disputed; the consolidated fabrics of ages to be taken down; the foundations hidden for centuries dug up, and "plowed as a field;" the repose of first principles rudely broken; and all the questions connected with morals and religion—the whole schemes of theology, again and upon new issues, and in new modes, to be put to the test. The trumpet blast is even now heard, and the trampling of gathering hosts. Geology, Anthipology, Ontology, sound upon the key-note. Loud above the rest the stentorian voices of Cousin, Lyle, Agassiz, and Strauss, lead the terrific concert. The profound German, the supple French, the stately Italian, and the sturdy Saxon, mingle in the loud confusion. Wide is the scheme, and insidious, deep, and hidden the plot, and fierce and deadly will be the onset. Pigmies will be of no use in this strife. Men of mail, of iron endurance, and inexhaustible skill will be required; men who have armor and well understand its use.

While such is the demand without, it is even greater within! Here old and new heresies

present a formidable array. Rome, the ancient, the bloody, the victor of a thousand fields, girds herself again. "The legions of the seven hills," with waiving plumes and streaming pennons are in motion; and their war-shout rings through the earth as of yore. Her trained bands, subtle as death, and as dangerous, too, are chafing to the battle.

Unitarianism: gentlemanly, scholarly, classic, eloquent—Tractarianism: political, grasping, proud, exclusive—Universalism: reckless, unscrupulous, debative—Swedenborgianism: mystical, symbolical, ideal; with nameless other heresies, are at the anvil. Day and night witness their toil: mart and solitude quiver with their influence. The pulpit and the press spread their poison on the blast, and they go forth on their mission of death. In the city and over the land, the disseminated seeds are taking root, and producing a harvest; stealthily and noiselessly, like the herbs, they are growing up.

Great questions of philology, exegesis, hermeneutics, history, and science, are involved. Questions, practical and theoretical, direct and

remote ; embracing in their solution, all that is dear, beautiful, and divine in our glorious Christianity. Questions which great learning only, and that when guided by study and severe intellectual effort, and that skill which systematic culture alone can impart, can bring to a successful elucidation. These lie along our path and must be encountered ; not as pastime merely, but as a most sacred duty committed to us as the expounders and guardians of the truth ; at our peril only can we be found unprepared for the trust.

But here the interest is common. Others will meet the emergency, though we should loiter in inglorious ease, or stagger beneath shameful imbecility. Evangelical churchmen will be here, and Independents, and leading all, Presbyterians of the old Scotch school : a gifted race, sturdy, harnessed, and inured to arms. These will stand in this Thermopylæ, and bear away the laurels, as they have done before. But are we willing they should do it alone ? Can we who glory so much, survive the shame of a disgrace so keen as this ? In these great

battles for Zion, has our host no place? When the enemies of Salem count her towers and reckon up her strength, shall they make no account of us? Heaven forbid it! To be second or inferior were not only a dishonor to make us blush, but a crime to make us tremble.

There is an emergency, where we must be a party, and where upon the success of our single arm, against almost consolidated evangelical Christendom, stupendous issues are staked. We mean the contest between those hoary enemies, whose colossal forms tower up through ages, and whose feuds have darkened centuries—Arminianism and Calvinism.* Neither of these systems acknowledge defeat, neither has retired from the arena; as one or the other must do before the world can settle into permanent repose. While they both remain vital and defiant, there must be contention. The questions are such that each cannot have quiet while they

* That Romanism and high Church Episcopalianism, with some minor sects, stand in common with us upon the issue, detracts nothing from the truth of the above statement; the defense of the truth here devolves upon us.

are undecided ; one world is too narrow for the peaceable operation of two such forces. It is not a contest for victory, but a struggle for existence : the final triumph of the one is the essential death of the other.

The scope of the debate is vast, and cannot be narrowed down. It embraces the profoundest depths of theology, and the most intricate labyrinths of philosophy : it regards the plainest maxims of practical life, and the most occult principles of metaphysics : it is a controversy on the basis truths of the divine government, and the dearest and most vital interests of human beings : it ramifies everywhere throughout the entire tissues of ethics and theology, and ultimately involves the whole scheme of revelation. Unavoidably, the prosecution of this stupendous controversy to a successful issue must bring into requisition vast, varied and profound erudition. On the side of Calvinism is arrayed the accumulated learning of ages, and the hoary prestige of illustrious names. It is garrisoned in universities, and hedged about by the most polished, learned, and influential pulpit that ever was upon

earth. It is consecrated by a thousand endearments, and garnered away in the central heart of millions. It is embalmed in poetry, and crystalized in prose; renowned in history and immortalized in literature; and at this moment is sustained by a piety the most beautiful, and a zeal and learning the most persuasive and irresistible. Such is the system with which, and the honored names with whom we are called to contend, for what we believe to be the truth. Most onerous is the mission, and most rash and foolish will we be if we venture without considering the strength and resources of our foe, and a corresponding preparation for the gigantic contest.

But do you say it is wounded? Admitted: but not dead. Who inflicted the wound? We answer—what it is well to remember—the scholars of the Church. The logical Wesley, the argumentative Fletcher, the profound Watson, the classic Fisk—men of erudition. Do you say it will never rise again? What shall hinder? It is up now, and full of vigor and power. Not so vital as before, but convalescing.

A race of scholars, such as they who commenced the work—men of power, and skill, and industry, will be required for its completion—to minister at its funeral obsequies. No inferior race can do this work. They may hurl the obsolete weapons wrought by masters for their use, but it will be as David with Saul's armor, the unwieldy burden will but entangle them and make them an easy prey. They need the power to forge thunderbolts for themselves. No! no!! no!!! the work is not done, the enemy is not conquered. The territories wrested from his grasp will return again, and his sceptre of *fate* will be absolute as before, unless fortified with the defenses which elaborate culture only can furnish. Blind, indeed, must he be who cannot perceive the urgency and imminence in this direction.

Such are some of the responsibilities of Methodism, growing out of her relations to theology—some common, others peculiar.

If the truth be with her, mankind are interested in her success. That success under God depends chiefly on the ministry. The treasure is

committed to them. They are the constituted expounders and guardians. The guilt of failure, as well as the glory of success, must return to them. Having the right, God and humanity require it of us, that we be able to make it appear. Defeat, through any want of possible qualification in us, will be our eternal shame and reprobation. No zeal, no piety, no labors, no sacrifices, no magnanimity, will shield us long from the merited displeasure of Heaven, and withering reproaches of earth—as men intrusted with the truth, but too indolent, too imbecile to defend it. This might be endured, but a woe will overtake us deeper than the satire of men, more dreadful than the temporary displeasure of Heaven. God will require an account of the talents committed, and when it is found that ours was laid away in a napkin, what answer shall we be able to make.

But, it is answered, truth is simple, and lies open upon the surface, and no such recondite learning is requisite for its discovery or defense; that, like the sun, it is manifest by its own shining, and needs no helps to be visible; that

in the hands of ignorance, it is more than a match for error under the auspices of knowledge and skill. But is it so? Are there no obscurities to be removed, no principles to be mastered, no facts to be known? Is all so plain, so obtrusive, so outstanding, that inquisition is unnecessary? Has the rogue, Error, so bad a chance that a blind police is a sufficient watch for him; and is Truth so conspicuous, that it needs no assistance to make its glory manifest. Such is not the verdict of experience. The toil of ages denies it. The wise of all times pronounce against it. Truth is the accretion of labor and years,—slowly through centuries the fabric has risen up,—and to be kept free from the clouds of error, and intact amid the ruthless assaults which are made upon it, requires vigilance the most constant, and learning the most vast, various, and profound.

3. Our third argument is derived from the relations of the ministry to the development of the Church.

The Church has both an intellectual and spiritual life, and these are related the one to

the other. The spiritual is attained through and dependent upon the intellectual, both in its beginnings and progress. The spiritual is used as synonymous with the moral and religious. We do not say that the spiritual is the same as the intellectual, or by the intellectual, but through and dependent upon it; so that the spiritual can never exist without, or pass beyond the intellectual, and may not be always parallel with it.

This is so obvious a principle, and so familiar in morals, that it cannot require elaborate treatment; yet it is so important in its connection with our argument, that we may be excused for unfolding it more fully. It is recognized in our office, and in the whole economy of salvation. We do not directly minister spiritual life, nor is it inwrought by the immediate agency of mere power.

God does not, as it were, seize hold of the soul, and by divine force develop its religious life. The Church is not thus made spiritual, either in the members or in the body. The fruits are not thus produced. Spiritual life is not an effect of this kind, nor does it super-

vene upon mere dim desires or impulses. It is attained in all its stages through the intelligence. Truth is presented to the mind, and is made by the divine Spirit the instrument of all development: of conviction, of penitence, of desire, of faith, of regeneration, of maturity in the graces, and up-building in Christ. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." "Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free." Truth first, sanctity afterward.

In order that an object be desired, it must first be apprehended by the mind as desirable, for the desire can only be attained through the intelligence. So of love, so of faith, so of any emotion or exercise of moral faculties—a mental exercise must precede the moral, and the moral must be attained through the mental.

But how vast and infinite the scope of truth bearing on spiritual development, elemental to the full growth and enlargement of the soul, and of the Church, the sum total of pious souls! A single truth apprehended becomes

the initiative; it is carried forward by the instrumentality of an infinite succession, widening and deepening through eternity. It is commenced in time and upon earth, and progresses forever in heaven. We conduct it to a certain point, where we cease, because we can advance no further. God and angels take it up, and immortality is devoted to its advancement and completion. Am I correct in this view? How momentous, then, becomes the relation of the minister, and how indispensable the widest knowledge of truth, and the utmost capability to unfold and enforce it. Upon his administration depends the essential life of the body of Christ—the Church.

He is to lead her forth to a high and enlightened experience, to expand and beautify her graces, to elicit and direct her charities, to quicken her efforts, to open to her the programme of duty and unseal the fountains of consolation, to stir up her conscience and incite her zeal, to purge away her errors and illuminate her faith, to polish her within and without “after the similitude of a palace.” “When we preach,

warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Truth is his instrument: he needs to comprehend it fully, and eliminate it forcibly. Whatever graces are requisite for this his position imperatively demands, whether of conception or elocution. He needs to be familiar with it as a musician with the keys of his instrument, the citizen with the implements of his trade, or the merchant with articles of his barter. Not with one truth, but with all truth. All truth will subserve his ministry and enhance his power—truths, whether of revelation or science—whether they relate to God or nature, to earth or heaven. All truth is related; the knowledge of one facilitates the illustration of the rest. He must be at home on Sinai and Calvary, ready to glow with the terrors of the former, or to melt with the mercy of the latter; to wield the sword of justice, or wave the olive of peace; to repel the sacrilegious intruder, or console the affrighted suppliant; to tear down false foundations and establish the true, and

whatever besides will reprove sin and advance righteousness. All these things pertain to his apostleship. He must be up with the age and before it, leading the van and guiding it onward. The love, the faith, the benevolence, the enterprise, the power, as well as the glory of the Church, will depend upon his capabilities. He will want plans upon a wide scale, and laid upon a firm basis. From his spiritual and intellectual Pisgah he must be able to view the great, and grand, and glorious, and use and transform men by their exhibition.

This is an age of books, of reading, of the pen. The printed page has become an all-pervading agency, the silent preacher in a million sanctuaries. He will need to command this power—he must preach with the pen as well as with the tongue, from the page as well as from the pulpit, amid the quiet of the home as well as the excitement of the throng. The guardianship of the truth will require this; he cannot be equal to his enemies without it. The Church must have a literature—a literature promotive of her growth—a literature

auxiliary to her pulpit! Who shall furnish it? The people will read, and read more and more; and their reading will leave its impress. The reading of any people will, to a great extent, determine their character. Here is an urgent demand at the present time, and it lies at the door of the ministry. With us it is a peculiar need. We are a young people, and have produced but few authors—among the few not many eminent. The field is open, and the want urgent. When we enter a well-selected library, comprising thousands of volumes, upon examination we find them mainly from the pens of Churchmen and Presbyterians, or branches of the Calvinistic family. We have no place, or the most limited possible among them.* There is an apology in our age and circumstances, but so much the greater the need. Men cannot, as a rule, write books that will be read, and furnish a literature which will be valuable, without extensive culture. We may

* We do not forget that we have Wesley, Clarke, Fletcher, and a few other eminent names; but the list is small, and needs to be vastly increased.

ignore this demand, but it will be our madness, and we shall reap the bitter fruits.

Such, then, are the relations of the minister to the spiritual development of the Church. It is not enough to guide a poor ignorant sinner to Jesus; this is a great work, but it is only the beginning. He must lead him on and up through the mysteries of a higher and ever-improving experience, by means of an expanding and ever-increasing knowledge.

4. Our fourth argument is drawn from the nature of the work itself.

The gospel may be preached, and preached successfully, without extensive learning. This has been already conceded. But it can be preached better, other things being equal, with it. The absence of learning is, therefore, always a calamity.

To argue this proposition would be an insult to our hearers. No one, it is presumed, questions it; yet it includes all that we contend for. To admit that liberal culture is an advantage at all, concedes our ground that it is a need.

The original Scriptures were written in lan-

guages now dead. They have been faithfully translated into the vernacular of the living ministry, so that they may be well understood without a knowledge of the languages in which they were first written. Yet all will admit that it is most desirable to be conversant with the original text; that he who is so learned has an advantage over him that is not. Such knowledge must, therefore, be needed to a ministry, to constitute it what it should be.

Language is the implement of the minister's trade. The more perfectly he can use it the greater will be the mastery—the clearer and more forcible will be his exhibitions of the truth. This knowledge is, therefore, an absolute need.

The subjects of discourse embrace an endless variety of every shade of importance, and every degree of sublimity; ranging from the existence and grandeur of God to the simplest questions of every-day life. The scope, the variety, the occultness of the subjects—their implexity and complication with outside sciences—must require an incredible amount of research and learning for their mastery, and more for the clear and

impressive communication of them to others. This necessity increases with the intelligence of the people ; but to a great extent is inherent and invariable. A higher range of topics, and more elaborate treatment, with an improved style, will always be absolutely necessary before an educated audience ; but the accomplishments which are imperative under such circumstances are needed under all.

It would be deemed quite absurd for a plowman, or mechanic, or merchant, however intelligent and strong-minded, to enter either the practise of law or physic, without preparation. But why more absurd than that he should enter the ministry ?* Is less learning necessary here than there ? Is the field narrower, or the ministrations of less moment ? Are the questions connected with theology less recondite, and their

* A state of circumstances may exist, in which with less learning a man might be useful in any of the professions ; but as a general law, and particularly in communities educated to thought, the need is imperative for professional training. What is true of other professions is true of the ministry ; with the general exceptions made in other parts of this discourse.

elucidation more easy than those connected with law or medicine? The idea is simply preposterous! The man who should form such an estimate, furnishes the best possible proof of an entire incapacity to appreciate, or utter disqualification to perform, the duties of the office. He has no more than mastered the alphabet, and deserves to be turned from its portals as an impertinent intruder, who would defile things sacred with unwashed hands. No, it is not so! Theology is not a calling in which learning is at discount. More than any other it demands culture and erudition, in the degree in which it rises above every other in the magnitude and grandeur of its themes, and the majesty and moment of its consequences.

Such are some of the considerations we submit in support of our thesis. We think they deserve, at the least, a respectful attention; and with us they assume great weight and importance. Others might be added, and these might be greatly extended; but for the present we rest the case here, hoping that others who are capable to do the subject more justice, will not find it un-

worthy their powers, to enter more fully into what we have feebly indicated. Most profoundly impressed are we with the conviction, that the entire Church, and especially the ministry, need to bestow upon the subject most thorough consideration; and perilous in the extreme to all that is prized and dear to us, do we believe will be the neglect.

II. Our second proposition is, Methodism needs a more spiritual and consecrated ministry.

Vain were learning without spirituality and consecration. No accomplishments can be substituted for these: nothing will answer in their place, or atone for their want. Though we might preach like angels from heaven, we would be but "a sounding brass and a tinkling symbol." Our polished and literary declamations would fall like moon-beams on glacier mountains, or harmlessly as snow-flakes on the granite. Sharpness of logic, brilliancy of imagination, ornateness of diction, powerful elocution, strength and force of argumentation, with whatever makes up scholastic opulence and faultless discourse, however admired, and however needed, alone

will be of small value: nay, may be an absolute curse. We want them, but we want them fused; we want them not alone, but in amalgum; not for their splendor as principals, but for their use as instruments. We want them glowing and flaming like the top of Sinai, full of thunders and earthquakes!

We want prophets of the closet as well as study; men whose hearts glow while their intellects shine: who feel deeply, as well as think profoundly: who experience, as well as theorize: consecrated, as well as ordained: men, who walk with God and who are intrusted with his secrets: who go before the Church, and say, "Follow us as we follow Christ."

Such men are they who are the want of the times: men whose hearts and minds quiver with the earnestness of the age, and sympathize with the all-pervading excitement moving the world around them; but who direct all their earnestness, and expend all their excitement, in behalf of souls, and with reference to eternity: who come forth to the people, like Moses from the mount, glowing with inspirations and

burning with messages; who when they speak, cause the people to cover their faces, and say, "Lo, God hath spoken."

A ministry who enjoy religion, and love its ordinances; whose lives, and tempers, and words are unblamable patterns of excellence; whose only ambition is to commend their Master, and transform the world by his exhibition; who live and move among men, as ambassadors from heaven, legates of the skies; who love souls, and feel their worth, as the "travail of the Redeemer;" and who, to save men, count no toil, no effort, no sacrifices, too great; who are penetrated with the awfulness of the divine doctrines, and hold and dispense them as a sacred trust for mankind; who feel a burning furnace of love and grace within them, and hear a voice, ever saying unto them, Go, preach! to whom it is a "woe" if they "preach not the gospel;" who weep over the world as their Saviour wept over Jerusalem, and who would die for it, as he did upon Calvary, if they might win it to him; who preach not of envy or strife, or worldly glory, but for a love of souls; not men-

pleasers ; not careful of their own name ; not time-servers ; not indolent or seekers of ease ; not mere word-venders or declaimers ; not men who mount the pulpit as a profession, or employ it as an engine of ambition ; not blusterers or enthusiasts who give out sound for sense, or vainly expect from inspiration what they should seek by labor ; not empty-hearted and empty-headed pretenders, who run before they are sent to proclaim what they neither feel nor understand ; not such—of which the highways and by-ways are full—but men—men of God—men whose hearts glow with a deathless flame, and whose tongues burn with messages ; who stand in their pulpits as watchmen, and thunder in Zion ; whose polished and cultivated intellects, full and shining with the truth, skillful and mighty in its exhibition, are moved and impelled by hearts running over with love, and resplendent with holiness ; as the prophets, apostles, and the fathers before them ; Salem mourns in all her borders, and weeps at all her altars, for a ministry like this ; and the earth and the world languish for them. How would such a host cause the wilderness to bloom,

and the desert to blossom as the rose! How would they carry the truth in triumph through the world, and cover it over with the verdure of a fruitful spring! How would the nations rise up at their coming, and the mountains and the floods sing at their approach! How would infidelity fly before such a ministry, scathed by its lightnings; and error, obduracy, and sin, how would they disappear amid its light, and melt away in its beams! How, under its instruction, and infused with its spirit, would the Church rise up, and shine with the radiance of heaven! How would it penetrate commerce, and impress professions, and affect governments, and send the aliment of a new life through the entire tissues of society! How would it rise above thrones and dynasties, and prejudices stronger and older than these, and rule, and fashion, and sanctify all! Such is its mission and ordination. And what, were the pulpit what it should be, should hinder?

Is any one about to say, The thing can never be: a ministry of this kind? a ministry so learned, and yet so consecrated; so intellectual, and yet so

spiritual ; so much culture, and yet so great zeal. Why not? Has history recorded no examples? Have the instances been few of great learning, and yet great devotion? Count up the heroes of the Church, and what do you find? Whence have come the great lights, whose names gleam on the martyrs' page, and reformers' roll? Who are they who have braved kings and senates, and who paled not at the stake and wheel? And why not? Is education a foe to religion? Is enlargement of the intellect inimical to devoutness of the heart? Are they who are best capable to understand the truth, and who take in more of its effulgence, less likely to be faithful to it, to love it and with zeal to propagate it? Surely these things cannot be a necessity. To believe so for a moment would extinguish our lights of hope for the future, and overthrow our faith in the history of the past. The things are not irreconcilable. Light and heat do blend in the same beam ; and so wisdom and love animate the same soul, and spread their effulgence and power over the same ministry.

We must have it: culture and zeal, light

and heat, mind and heart! Blended, they will give us power with men and power with God, and we shall prevail. Deprived of them, we shall sink down, down, down in weakness and imbecility, until not a historic vestige will be left of a people who might have been great for God in the earth.

And now, having indicated what we believe to be our need, as a Church, with regard to our ministry, and some of the reasons in support thereof, we would linger a few moments still further to express the conviction, that a most urgent period is upon us, as a denomination, which, unless we shall have heavenly wisdom enough to meet, will bring us sorrow and decay. Brothers, I am not mistaken in this. Painful it may be to admit it—painful it is to us all. But what then? Shall we ignore it? Shall we relieve the case thus? Surely there is a better way. God has prospered us, has enlarged our borders until our very growth has made new wants. It is to our honor that it is so. Let us not despair because of resulting responsibilities—let us not sink under them. Rather let us rise

up in the strength of our God and meet them. The generations are looking to us; let us not disappoint them. If we that commenced the work, under embarrassment and difficulties unavoidable to the times, cannot meet the demand as we would, let us train up for it the sons whom God shall call to succeed us, and to carry on the work when we are at rest. As we fall, let us see to it that those who take our places shall be our superiors. If there is an apology for us, there ought to be none for those who come after us. If we do our duty, none will be needed. Like towers of strength and beauty, our pulpits will cover the land. Whether we look to the past or the future, hortatory voices salute us—there, amid the retreating shadows, the fathers stand pointing us on—yonder, amid the brightness, the ages stand beckoning us forward. Duty cries to us, with a loud cry. We will not prove recreant. The love of souls, the woes and wants of a perishing world, the vows of God, will be effectual to incite us to all needful effort.

If we shall be true to ourselves and faithful

to our Master, a glorious future awaits us; yea, even now it bends over us full of hope and promise. Should we not, our place will be given to another people, and they will inherit our blessings.

But we are extending our remarks too long. May God grant us wisdom and grace for his name's sake. AMEN.

THE END.

Notice.

It is in our thoughts, should it seem wise and prudent, and should the present discourse be productive of good, to follow it in a short time with some suggestions as to a method for meeting the demand herein indicated; together with a discussion of some modifications in our economy, which we believe to be imperatively demanded in order thereto. Let no one take alarm: the modifications alluded to are only such as we think, upon reflection, all will see would greatly increase our usefulness and enlarge our resources, without at all impairing our integrity, or injuriously affecting our general system.

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